

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.

**Rick Scott**

Governor

Celeste Philip, MD, MPH

State Surgeon General

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation**January 6, 2017**

KNOWING THE SIGNS COULD SAVE A HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIM

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**Port Charlotte, Fla. –** One phone call could free someone from slavery; do you know when to call?

In 2015, the National Human Trafficking Hotline received 1,518 calls in the state of Florida reporting evidence of human trafficking. Each call brings law enforcement closer to rescuing victims of sex trafficking and labor trafficking, and prosecuting criminals. During the month of January, the Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County is urging residents to learn the signs of human trafficking in support of Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

“We live in a world where slavery still exists, but it doesn’t have to,” says Dr. Frank Louis Lepore, Administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County. “Most human trafficking in the U.S. occurs in New York, California, and right here in Florida. By knowing what to look for, every Charlotte County resident can play a role in identifying and freeing victims of human trafficking.”

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery that includes forced labor, domestic servitude, or sexual exploitation using force, fraud, and/or coercion. There are an estimated 27 million adults and 13 million children around the world who are victims of human trafficking. Approximately 75-80% of human trafficking is for sex.

These are just a few red flags to be aware of:

- Seems anxious, fearful, or paranoid. Avoids eye contact.
- Tearfulness or signs of depression.
- Unexplained bruises or cuts or other signs of physical abuse.
- Appears to be in a relationship with someone who is dominating.
- Never is alone and/or always has someone translating or answering questions on their behalf.
- Not in control of their own finances.
- Presents with secrecy or unable to answer questions about where they live.
- Has no identification such as a license, passport, or other ID documents.
- Being a recent arrival to the United States and does not speak English.
- Is afraid of law enforcement or receiving help from an outside entity.

Florida Department of Health**in Charlotte County**

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FloridaHealth.gov**Accredited Health Department**
Public Health Accreditation Board

During the month of January, the Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County's Injury and Violence Prevention Program has coordinated several trainings in the county. These trainings aim to increase the number of Charlotte County residents who can identify possible victims of trafficking, and provide information to law enforcement that could lead to their rescue. If you see signs of a suspected case of trafficking, please call local law enforcement immediately or call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.

All Charlotte County residents are encouraged to attend a free training on human trafficking awareness that will be held on January 17 at the Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County, 1100 Loveland Blvd, Port Charlotte, from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM.

Others trainings scheduled in January are aimed at Charlotte County Public School social workers, nurses, and nutrition staff, as well as local first responders. For more information on any of these trainings, or to register for the January 17 training, please contact Heather M. Boyd, Injury and Violence Prevention Coordinator with the Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County at 941-623-7273 or heather.boyd@flhealth.gov.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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